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MRS. PEPPER'S GHOST.

Believe in ghosts? I hope I am not  
such a fool as that! said Mr. Pepperton  
seriously, and he looked with an air of  
supreme contempt at his questioner.

When I can put my hand upon a sensible  
sort of a fellow who has seen one in  
broad daylight when he was wide awake,  
and quite sober then I will give the mat-  
ter my attention, but until then I shall  
keep to my opinion that there were never  
such things, and it's only asses who be-  
lieve in anything of the sort.

Thank you Mr. Pepperton, returned  
the young farmer laughing. But seeing  
he believed, and if I did not see my  
mother three days after she was buried  
my name isn't Timothy Lane.

What? exclaimed Mr. Pepperton,  
when people are nervous and out of their  
heads they say anything.

Only an odd fellow, Mr. Pepperton,  
said the young farmer, who has seen  
nothing of the sort.

No! it isn't that, replied the young  
farmer. Those things depend upon a  
person's state of mind, and you were  
naturally excited and upset at such a  
time. You had been thinking of Mrs. Lane  
all day and therefore it was not surprising  
that you saw her at night.

It wasn't at night at all; it was in the  
afternoon. I was going down the path  
in front of our house when I saw her  
standing by the gate, just as plain as I see  
you now. As I drew near she gave me  
a queer look, and then she faded out,  
and though she has never since been visible,  
I often think she is nearer me than I know.

Mr. Pepperton started, and glanced  
round the parlor of the George with an  
uneasy air.

I don't believe anything of the sort, he  
said sharply; it is all a humbug! Besides  
it stands to reason it wouldn't always be  
convenient for dead people to come back  
to their old haunts. The first Mrs. Pepperton,  
for instance, wouldn't just come to look  
at me some one else in her place, and of  
course, if she came back she would have  
to pass her time.

Unless she gave you notice of her visit  
beforehand, and you had the second Mrs.  
Pepperton in the cupboard, observed the  
landlord laughing.

Mr. Pepperton laughed, too, but not  
exactly as if he enjoyed the joke. It was  
all very well just now, but he had a feel-  
ing that it wouldn't be so pleasant to look  
back upon an hour later, when he made  
his way home through the church yard by  
himself.

And then if there were ghosts, by any  
chance, they might be very much inclined  
to take revenge upon him for his skepti-  
cism, and convince him against his will,  
so that although he thought he would not  
join in any unseemly jests, but as it  
would not have done to appear to retract  
after having so loudly asserted his dis-  
belief, Mr. Pepperton effected a compro-  
mise by remarking:

There is a great many mysterious  
things in this world we are not expected  
to inquire into, and what you don't un-  
derstand it is best not to talk about it  
seems to me. I'll take one glass of grog  
Mr. Hobbs, if you please and then I'll  
take myself off. I promised Mrs. Pepperton  
I'd be home in good time to-night, as  
she isn't well.

Mr. Pepperton's boon companions ex-  
changed glances; it was such a surprising  
thing for him to show any consideration  
toward Mrs. Pepperton, they could hardly  
believe their ears. However, nobody  
ventured to joke him on the subject, and  
as it was not understood that he disliked  
talking of ghosts, and the question had  
been brought up by one of the party, it  
was not deemed prudent to touch upon  
the subject again. As for Mr. Pepperton,  
he went home with a very different feel-  
ing from that with which he had started  
out. He felt that he was in a very com-  
plicated position, and he felt that he was  
in a very awkward position. He felt that  
he was in a very awkward position, and  
he felt that he was in a very awkward  
position.

And for the life of him he could not  
help listening. If he might only have  
expressed a doubt it would have been a  
relief to him, but of course this would  
have been a gross insult to his wife's  
discreetly to their relations' verities,  
and consequently Mr. Pepperton had to  
deny himself this comfort.

Come, come, he said nervously, at last,  
this is too bad, a man comes out to be  
cheerful you know; besides you fellows  
live in the village and won't have time to  
get up any fancies going home.

But as you don't believe in ghosts it  
doesn't matter, said Timothy Lane. I do  
though, and I am glad I haven't got your  
walk tonight, for the church yard is an  
uncommon lonely place to walk through  
after dark.

There is no more the matter with that  
than with other places, he answered with  
a confidence he did not feel; it is just the  
idea. But I am thankful to say that I am  
not superstitious like you Timothy.

He drank his last drop of grog, and  
then rose to his feet, adding just to reas-  
sure himself:

Besides I have been through it often  
enough without feeling anything, and I  
can't see that there's any difference be-  
tween to-night and other nights.

None whatever, replied Timothy Lane,  
with a significant glance at one of his  
companions as if to draw attention to Mr.  
Pepperton's discomposure. Why should  
there be?

That's just what I say—why should  
there be? Still I can't say but what it is  
more cheerful to have a companion these  
dark nights.

Of course it is more cheerful to have a  
companion, returned Timothy not only  
dark nights but at all times. I am soci-  
able myself and quite understand what  
you mean. It is a pity you don't live  
nearer the village and then you would  
have plenty of company.

No! I should dare say and very little  
money, answered Mr. Pepperton, laugh-  
ing, as he tapped on his great coat and  
turned his face determinedly toward the  
door.

You don't mean we should rob you

going home do you? Inquired Timothy,  
who seemed to be vastly amused about  
something.

Well, not exactly, but you would take  
up my time, and time's money. Well,  
what a dark night! he added as he opened  
the door and looked down the village  
street. I don't believe I shall be able to  
find my way.

Your own will get you lost, said Tim-  
othy, after you have been out a few minutes.  
Observed the landlord encouragingly,  
Good night, Mr. Pepperton, good night,  
and a pleasant, pleasant walk.

This sounded like sarcasm to the old  
farmer, as he went shivering along the  
path, keeping his eye fearfully on the tall  
shadow of the old church. Hitherto he  
had never had any feelings of the sort,  
for he had been out of his mind for some  
time.

However, it had not been done in  
vain. He had been out of his mind for  
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